

FGDC Vegetation Subcommittee
2004 Report

1. Program/Activity Name: Vegetation Subcommittee

2. What are the programs this data supports?

The Vegetation Subcommittee supports vegetation classification, inventory, monitoring, and mapping programs. These programs are managed by 17 FGDC cabinet agencies and many other agencies, organizations, academia, and professional societies.

Very Briefly Describe All Applicable Items:

3. Uses of Data: What are the end uses of this data? How does it benefit customers, support lead and other agency missions, etc.?

End users of vegetation data have an interest in classification, inventory, mapping, monitoring and managing our nation's natural resources. The users include federal, state, county, city, industry and private land managers, interpreters and site planners, researchers, natural resource industries, educators and students, land use policy makers, environmental and conservation organizations, and outdoor enthusiasts. Even though the participant Subcommittee agencies have different missions they need consistent, reliable data on vegetation resources.

Customers need consistent, reliable data describing vegetation resources to provide the foundation for an effective assessment, inventory, and management of the nation's ecosystems. Field managers need to understand and use appropriate field techniques to classify and map vegetation, by itself and in its relation to soils and other non-vegetative factors to assess habitats.

Vegetation data supports agency missions by providing essential information on commodity resources (e.g., timber and forage), wildlife and fisheries habitat, carbon sequestration, ecosystem function and health, societal values (e.g., urban cooling, clean air and water, and scenery).

4. Charter/Plan: Do you have a current charter or plan for collection? Should it be updated?

The Vegetation Subcommittee has had a charter since its inception. The Subcommittee is in the process of completing its review an updated charter and to developing a revised draft in FY2004.

5. Metadata: What is the status of metadata? Is it discoverable and served through the NSDI Clearinghouse? What percentage of this theme's data has metadata and is in a Clearinghouse node?

Approximately 50% of Forest Service units have vegetation data, and approximately 20% of Forest Service units have metadata that are discoverable and served through NSDI clearinghouses.

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Vegetation data (maps, plots, descriptions, species lists, etc) resulting from the USGS National Park Vegetation Mapping Program has high quality FGDC compliant metadata that is served in the NBII Clearinghouse.

The GAP Analysis Program data likewise has FGDC compliant metadata in the NBII Clearinghouse.

6. Standards: What is the status of this theme's data, process, transfer, and classification standards?

This item is a high priority for the subcommittee because an impending second revision to the existing standard. The Subcommittee has explored the adoption of non federal vegetation classification guidelines but is currently developing a draft standard based on non federal vegetation classification guidelines. The Subcommittee is in the process of supporting the revision of the current hierarchy standards.

7. Progress: List FY 2003/2004 activities/progress to date (quantify where possible)

Here is a list of the subcommittee's activities for FY 2003/2004:

- Revision of physiognomic level (possible proposal to Vegetation Subcommittee)
- Survey and prepare a status report (by Agency) on the implementation of standards (operational use of the standards)
- Frequently monitor relationship between FGDC and ESA Vegetation Panel and the relationship between FGDC and other subcommittees and work groups
- Evaluation of plots database and comparison with other federal plots databases.
- Complete standards for floristics and review ESA Panel report
- Testing/Validation of floristic standard
- Evaluate MOU revise as needed to finalize updated Charter
- Co-sponsored a meeting for Rangeland -Forest definition discussions
- Develop a long-term strategy and action plan in concert with others

8. Leadership: Describe your active leadership role with others (private, local, State, Federal) who collect and use this data.

Members of the FGDC Vegetation Subcommittee have been actively working with a special committee of the Ecological Society of America, the National Vegetation Classification Panel, which has been analyzing the FGDC approved National Vegetation Classification standard as an activity under the MOU between FGDC, ESA, NatureServe, and USGS (NBII). This ESA Panel has completed a document that makes recommendations on how to improve and expand the current standard pursuant to future direction within the existing standard. The Subcommittee has provided written recommendations and met formally with the ESA Vegetation Panel to discuss options for revisions to the document.

9. Collaborative Partnerships: How many major partnerships with others do you have on this theme? (list if desired)

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2004 Report

Through the Panel on Vegetation Classification of the Ecological Society of America, the FGDC Vegetation Subcommittee has established a working partnership with the community of academic and professional vegetation scientists.

10. Scope: Are you engaged in broad participation and international/global coordination?

The subcommittee is engaged in broad participation and international/global coordination. A few examples include the Association for Biodiversity Information, and the Ecological Society of America and working with international scientists to revise the hierarchy standards.

11. Policy: Do you have a policy in place for full and open access or data sharing?

Yes. The Subcommittee has been open with its work and meetings to encourage a high level of information and data sharing to expand opportunities for collaborations.

12. Are there areas or issues regarding lead responsibilities for spatial data themes that require attention, or lessons-learned that you would like to share with others? Please describe.

Coordination will be essential with other FGDC entities, e.g., Wetlands, Earth Cover, and Forest Sustainability Data. What mechanism exists to ensure compatibility among standards promulgated by these entities relative to vegetation? Attending meetings held by the FGDC.